

SOUL OF MAN UNDER
SOCIALISM 281

own personality, and producing his own individual work. At first none came to him. That did not matter. Then the few came to him. That did not change him. The many have come now. He is still the same. He is an incomparable novelist.

With the decorative arts it is not different. The public with really pathetic tenacity to what I believe were the direct traditions' of the Great Exhibition of international vulgarity, traditions that were so appalling that the houses in which people lived were only fit for blind people to live in. Beautiful

things began to be made, beautiful colours came from the dyer's hand, beautiful patterns from the artist's brain, and the use of beautiful things and their value and importance were set forth. The public were redly very indignant.

They lost their temper. They said silly things. No one minded.

No one was a whit the worse. No one accepted the authority of public opinion. And now it is almost impossible to enter

any modern house without seeing some recognition of good taste, some recognition of the value of lovely surroundings, some sign

of appreciation of beauty. In fact, people's houses are, as a

rule, quite charming nowadays. People have been to a very great extent civilized. It is only fair to state, however, that

the extraordinary success of the revolution in house-decoration

and furniture and the like has not really been due to the majority of the public developing a very fine taste in such matters.

It has been chiefly due to the fact that the craftsmen of things so appreciated the pleasure of making what was beautiful, and

woke to such a vivid consciousness of the hideousness, and

vulgarity of what the public had previously wanted, that they simply starved the public out. It would be quite impossible

at the present moment to furnish a room as rooms were furnished

a few years ago, without going for everything to an auction of second-hand furniture from some third-rate lodging-house. The

things are no longer made. However they may object to it,

people must nowadays have something charming ha their sur-

roundings. Fortunately for them, their assumption of authority

in these art-matters came to entire grief. It is evident, then, that all authority in such things is bad.

People sometimes inquire what form of government is most

suitable for an artist to live under. To this question there is

only one answer. The form of government that is most suitable

to the artist is no government at all. Authority over him and

his art is ridiculous. It has been stated that under
despotisms
artists have produced lovely work. This is not
quite so. Artists